

THE BALANCE

BY PETER J. POPOFF

THE Egyptians, the Greeks and other ancient nations considered *the balance* as the most reliable means for determining *the moral worth* of both the individuals and the nations. Yet it may be questioned what the balance, a mechanical apparatus, might have to do with human morals? Yes, but Job put that matter squarely: "Let me be weighed in an even *balance*, that God may know mine *integrity*." (Job xxxi, 6)

But was not Job's integrity known to God without a balance? And could not Zeus know, without his golden balances, which of the two contending nations, Greece and Troy, merited to live and which should perish? Again, how the Egyptians could explain that it was only by means of the great balance that the degree of righteousness of human heart was determined?

Perhaps one may say, the balance is but a figure of speech, a metaphor or an allegory, a simile or a mere symbol, a convenient and generally comprehensible manner of presenting *pro* and *contra* in a matter under consideration? Let it be. Even be it a mythical balance, yet it shall retain its interest and significance as a peculiar manner of human thought, if nothing else, nothing more. St. Paul considered it an allegory (Gal. iv, 24).

The ancient Egyptians had held that *the heart*, embracing the *love* of God and man, was the very substance of morality. Thus they represented the last judgment before Osiris, the Supreme Judge of the dead as the weighing of the heart. In the great balance, shown in an ancient Egyptian papyrus, the heart of the deceased was placed in one of its pans, and the feather of the Right in the other. Anubis, the jackal-headed divinity, attended to the process of weighing, touching the balance in two points, while Thot, the Ibis-headed divinity, recorded on a tablet the result of the weighing

and presented it to Osiris, sitting on his throne. Isis, the wife of Osiris, is represented there as holding a heart in her right hand, and with her left hand extended towards the balance she seems to control its working. Thus that papyrus picture shows clearly that the great balance was manipulated by the two divinities, guided of course by moral considerations. If the heart was found righteous, the deceased was considered as "justified" and was called a "little Osiris," that is, the son of the great Osiris, and was entitled to the right of swimming eternally in the golden boat of his Father. Placing the heart, the love of God and man, at the very centre of moral being, the Egyptians seems to have anticipated the Christian doctrine of love at least by twenty centuries.

The Egyptian mummies were made as if capable of feasting, for their mouth could be opened and closed. And in the Book of the Dead it is said: "He will eat and drink every day with Osiris; he will be living; he will be like God."

We read in the Iliad, when Achilles and Hector were about to engage in the final fight:

"Jove lifts *the golden balances* that show
The fates of mortal men, and things below:
Here each contending hero's lot he tries,
And weighs the *scale* surcharged with Hector's fate;
Heavy with death it sinks, and hell receives the weight."
(Book XXII, p. 264)

And on another occasion:

"The sire of gods *his golden scales* suspends,
With equal hand: in these explored the fate
Of Greece and Troy, and poised the mighty weight,
Press'd with its load, the Grecian balance lies
Low sunk on earth, the Trojan strikes the skies;
Then Jove from Ida's top his horrors spreads;
The clouds burst dreadful over the Grecian heads;
Thick lightnings flash; the muttering thunder rolls;
Their strength he withers, and unmans their souls,
Before his wrath the trembling hosts retire:
The gods in terrors, and the skies on fire."

Book VIII, p. 98.

Jove's golden balances seem to be equivalent to Destiny's decrees

concerning the lot of gods and men. We read in the Bible: "Job maketh a solemn protestation: Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait in my neighbor'd door. . . . Or I eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof." (Job xxxi, 6-17.)

"Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in *the balance*, they are altogether lighter than vanity." (Psalm lxii, 9)

"A false *balance* is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight." (Proverbs xi, 1)

"Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good." (Proverbs xxi, 23)

"A just weight and balance are the Lord's; all the weights of the bag are his work." (Prov. xvi, 11)

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a *balance*? Behold, the nations are a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All *nations* before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah xli, 12-17)

"They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the *balance*, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a *god*; they fall down, yea, they worship." (Isaiah xlvi, 6)

"Just *balances*, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have." (Lev. xix, 36)

"And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel, Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. In the night was Belshazzar the King of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius, the Median, took the kingdom." (Dan. v. 25-31)

"He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress." (Hosea xii, 7).

"Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may